

CLOSET OF MYSTERY CAUSES THREE TO GO MAD

MARY BOND was kept in a small closet in an upper story of the Bond farm house, near Elburn, Ill., for twenty-six years, according to the testimony of her brother-in-law, John Edwards.

The secret of her condition did not get out until Mary's mother lost her mind and Edwards found one day that his wife, too, had become insane with the worry.

structure. At the rear of the upper story the father constructed a closet 12 feet in length by 8 feet in width, which was so arranged as to be completely hidden from the view of any visitor who might possibly go to that portion of the residence. This closet was without a window. There was a door, but it was decided to remove it from its hinges and partially cover the opening with a blanket. This permitted the entrance of air, but very little light entered the cell-like apartment. It was just possible to see the outlines of the interior and that was all.

There was no bed in the closet. There was no room. Instead, a narrow mattress with a few covers, furnished the only couch that Mary Bond knew in twenty-six years. There she lay for more than a quarter of a century, probably never leaving that room in all that period. So far as John Edwards knew, she never left it until she was carried out of it by deputy sheriffs to the Kane County Courthouse.

The years passed. The Bonds ignored their neighbors, and the latter, taking the hint, ignored the Bonds. No one suspected the "living skeleton in the closet," and, while there was some gossip concerning the noncommunicative policy of the mysterious family, no one cared particularly.

Five years ago, William Bond died, worn out by a life of hard toil and worry. The burden of managing the farm fell upon the wife and daughter, Addie.

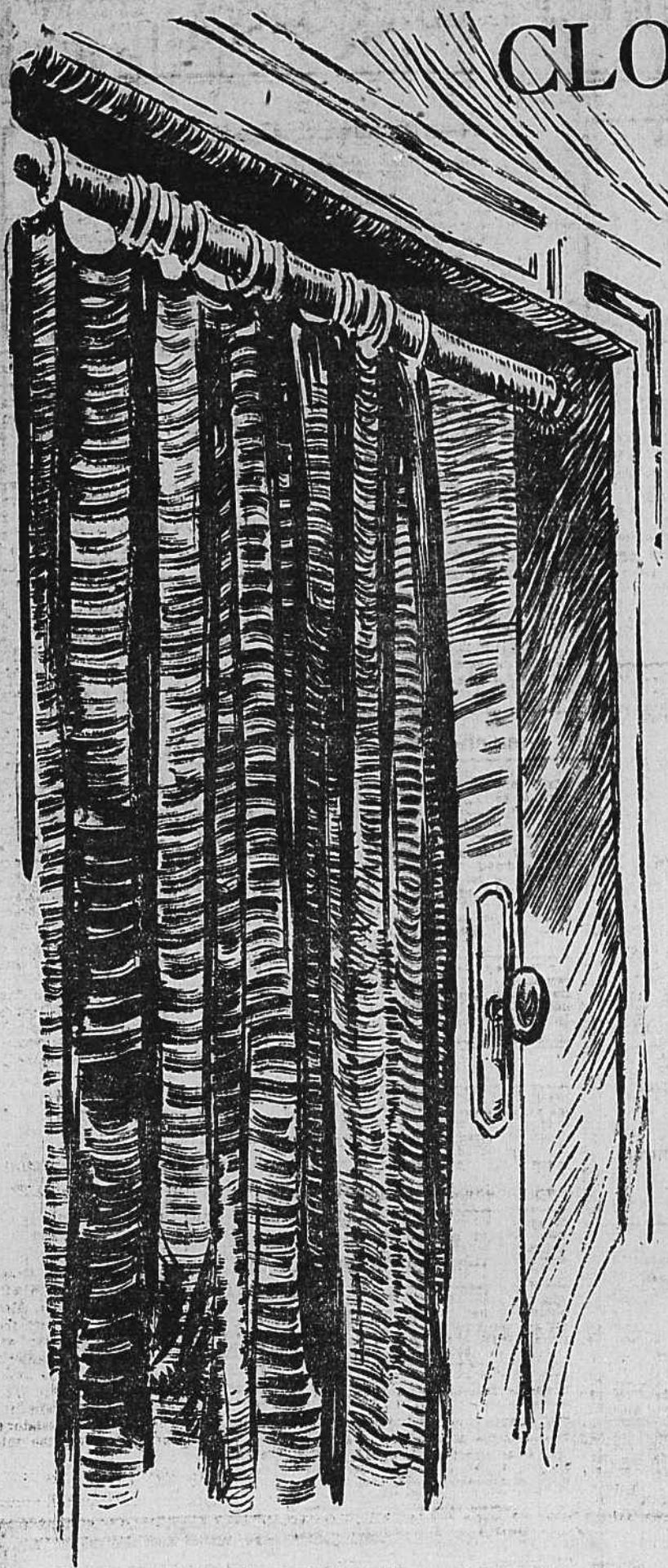
They engaged a stalwart young man, John Edwards, to work for them. He proved a will-

this new misfortune. He wondered what the end would be. The work of caring for the imprisoned daughter and the two mentally distraught women, now fell upon him. He was as patient and forbearing as had been the parents of and sister of Mary Bond. The weeks passed and they brought a cruel change into the life of John Edwards. His wife became violent.

Differing in her mental failure from that of the mother, she threatened him. The mother was quiet and inoffensive, as was the daughter in the closet. Not so, the elder daughter. Edwards had to be constantly upon his guard. Finally, early in the present month, Addie seized a huge butcher knife, and endeavored to stab her husband, shrieking at the top of her voice. Sadly, the husband seized the wife and disarmed her and then left the homestead. He had reached the climax.

Tameness the family horse, he drove to the county seat and related his extraordinary story to the sheriff and asked that the three women be placed in an asylum for the insane. No time was lost in respecting his request. A large automobile was obtained, and with two deputy sheriffs, Edwards returned to the homestead to execute the strange commission.

The officers were able to persuade the mother and married daughter to enter the car and they were passive during the entire time, making no resistance and accepting the word of the three



LYING upon the floor of the Kane County (Ill.) courtroom, but lightly clad, and in subject fear, Mary Bond attracted the attention of a crowd that had assembled, drawn by the strange spectacle.

Her eyes blinked in the bright light of the sunshine, a vacant expression upon her face, the unfortunate woman presented a remarkable appearance.

Ignoring all attempts to question her, paying no heed to the efforts of the judge, physicians or jury, the latter being summoned to inquire into her mental condition, she lay all but motionless upon the pallet upon which she was carried into the Courthouse. Most of the time she kept her hands over her eyes to shut out the glare of the light that streamed in through the windows.

Seated upon chairs near her were two other women, also the principals in a mental inquisition. They were Mrs. William Bond, mother of the one who was lying upon the floor, while the other was Mrs. Addie Bond Edwards, the married daughter of Mrs. Bond and older sister of Mary.

All three women were taken into custody together, forming the most extraordinary case in the history of the Illinois courts.

Mary Bond had been found in a small closet in an upper story of the Bond farmhouse near Elburn, Ill. She had been in this narrow apartment for twenty-six years, according to testimony. Her only attendants were the mother and daughter, who had been taken into custody with her. The minds of both had been stricken as a result of the patient care of the younger child. It was a pathetic sequel to a quarter of a century of self-sacrifice.

Mary Bond was kept from the knowledge of the inquisitive and gossiping public by her saddened parents and sister, and their efforts met with greater success than many of the wealthy class, who strive to keep some family secret. They probably would have been successful in avoiding all publicity to the end but for the unexpected climax when the mother and sister also fell victims to the mental disorder that had stricken the younger child.

There was but one witness when the extraordinary case was brought before the Kane County Court. This was John Edwards, the husband of Addie Bond, the elder sister. His story was told in a simple, straightforward manner that carried complete conviction, and was lis-

tened to with absorbing interest by judge, jury, physicians and the throng that packed the room. He was asked by the judge to go back to the beginning and relate every detail of the family history that was known to him in order to supply a complete record, not only for his own court, but also for the Hospital of the Insane, to which the strangely constituted trio were destined.

Edwards complied, and his remarkable tale created general amazement, even among the veteran attaches of the court. And this was Edwards' story:

William Bond and wife, the parents of Mary and Addie Bond, were natives of New Jersey, residing in Newark. The head of the family was employed in a factory there for a number of years, but found it difficult to make ends meet and supply comforts for his little family. Both the husband and wife were hard-working, God-fearing people, attending strictly to their own business, and seeking favors or charity from no one. Their first great affliction, and which developed into an almost overpowering one, came when Mary, the youngest daughter, was stricken with spinal meningitis when she was 18 months of age. There was no cure and she became helpless.

Her condition added to the distress of the parents. It was decided that something must be done to increase the family income, and, acting upon the advice of a friend, Bond and his wife decided to emigrate to Central Illinois and engage in farming. Mary was becoming a greater care. Her mind was falling with her body, and the parents found it necessary to keep her hidden from view in order to prevent the unpleasant comment of the neighbors.

It was impossible to keep all knowledge of the condition of the child from the people of the vicinity, but they hoped that upon a farm, remote from other families, it might be possible. Their resolve was taken and, converting their possessions into cash, the Bonds, with their two daughters, Mary and Addie, started for Illinois. They found a farm near Elburn, which suited them, and they purchased it. They managed to reach their new home without meeting any people of the community, and they were careful to avoid all communication with those around them.

The result was that the invalid daughter was carried into the farmhouse without any one suspecting that she was a mental incompetent or that the family was desirous of keeping their affairs hidden from the knowledge of those about them.

The homestead selected was a two-story

ing employee and was faithful in all things. He proposed marriage to Addie Bond, was accepted and they became man and wife. This was a relief to the mother and daughter, as Edwards took entire charge of the farm work and left simply the management of the dwelling to the women folk.

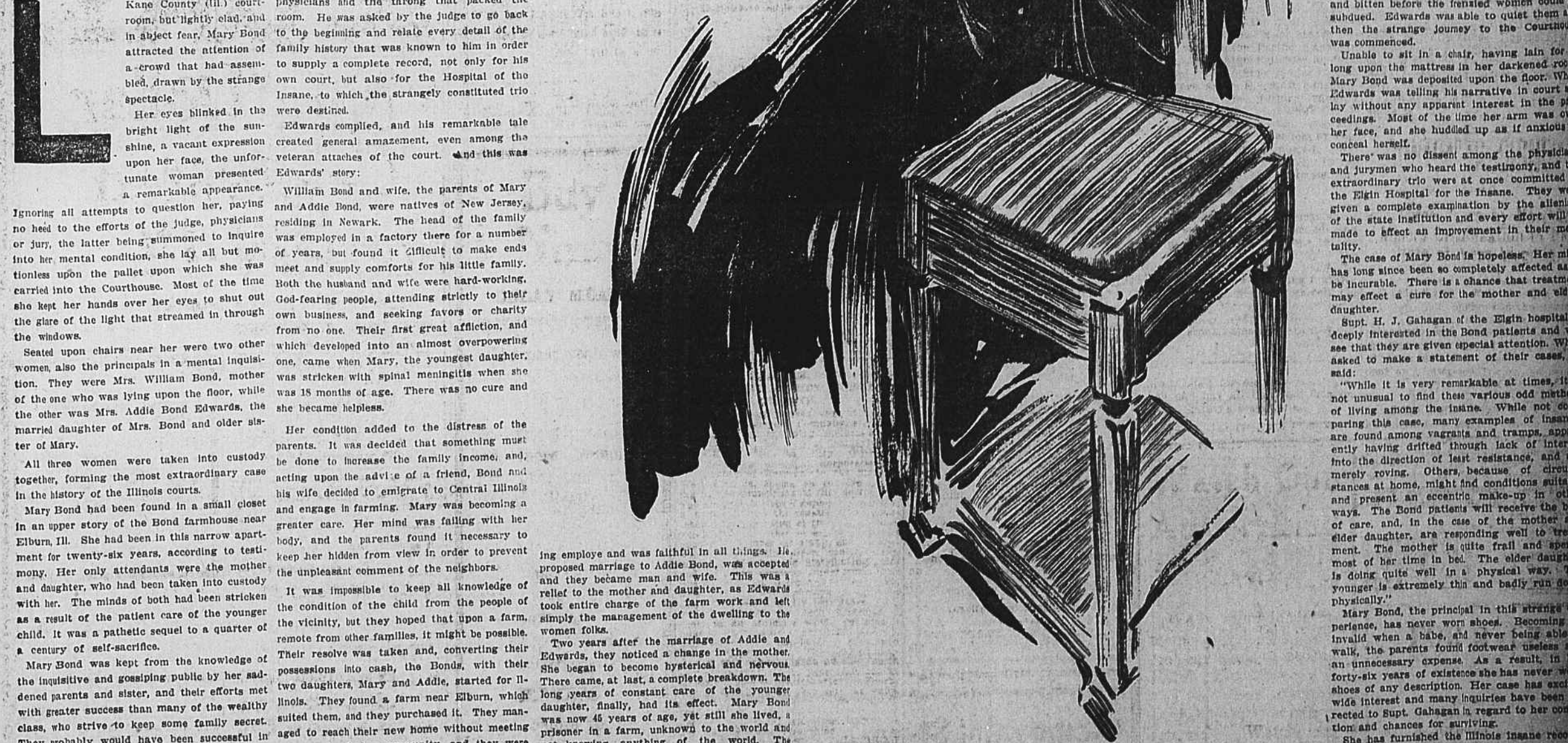
Two years after the marriage of Addie and Edwards, they noticed a change in the mother. She began to become hysterical and nervous. There came, at last, a complete breakdown. The long years of constant care of the younger daughter, finally, had its effect. Mary Bond was now 45 years of age, yet still she lived, a prisoner in a farm, unknown to the world and not knowing anything of the world. The mother was not violent, but queer and eccentric. The married daughter and her husband accepted the new burden with their usual stolidity, and the life in the Bond family went on with the same monotony, but still without informing the neighbors of what was transpiring.

Then came another change. The mind of the married daughter began to be affected. The burden of caring for Mary and also the mother assailed the mentality of the wife of John Edwards, and the latter was overwhelmed with

men without questioning. There was a marked change in the pacific situation, however, when the two stalwart deputies visited the hidden retreat of the upper story and there discovered the younger daughter, first disclosed to the prying eyes of strangers after so many years of privacy. She was carried out into the hallway and wrapped in blankets.

Disturbed from her quietude and solitude for the first time in a quarter of a century, the prisoner emitted a series of shrieks, realising, even with her vacant mind, that something radically untoward was taking place, and that she was in possible danger.

Hearing her cries, the mother and daughter in the automobile were roused from their stupor



John Edwards now alone with the curtained closet of mystery.

and ran to the house to rescue the long-hidden prisoner. The two attacked the officers heroically, one of the deputies being severely scratched and bitten before the frenzied woman could be subdued. Edwards was able to quiet them and then the strange journey to the Courthouse was commenced.

Unable to sit in a chair, having lain for so long upon the mattress in her darkened room, Mary Bond was deposited upon the floor. While Edwards was telling his narrative in court she lay without any apparent interest in the proceedings. Most of the time her arm was over her face, and she huddled up as if anxious to conceal herself.

There was no dissent among the physicians and jurymen who heard the testimony, and the extraordinary trio were at once committed to the Elgin Hospital for the Insane. They were given a complete examination by the alienists of the state institution and every effort will be made to effect an improvement in their mentality.

The case of Mary Bond is hopeless. Her mind has long since been so completely affected as to be incurable. There is a chance that treatment may effect a cure for the mother and elder daughter.

Supt. H. J. Gahagan of the Elgin hospital is deeply interested in the Bond patients and will see that they are given special attention. When asked to make a statement of their cases, he said:

"While it is very remarkable at times, it is not unusual to find these various odd methods of living among the insane. While not comparing this case, many examples of insanity are found among vagrants and tramps, apparently having drifted through lack of interest into the direction of least resistance, and are merely roving. Others, because of circumstances at home, might find conditions suitable and present an eccentric make-up in other ways. The Bond patients will receive the best of care, and, in the case of the mother and elder daughter, are responding well to treatment. The mother is quite frail and spends most of her time in bed. The elder daughter is doing quite well in a physical way. The younger is extremely thin and badly run down physically."

Mary Bond, the principal in this strange experience, has never worn shoes. Becoming an invalid when a babe, and never being able to walk, the parents found footworn useless and an unnecessary expense. As a result, in her forty-six years of existence she has never worn shoes of any description. Her case has excited wide interest and many inquiries have been directed to Supt. Gahagan in regard to her condition and chances for surviving.

She has furnished the Illinois insane records the most extraordinary case and one that will create comment and discussion among alienists for many years to come. John Edwards now lives alone in the farmhouse near Elburn. He is patiently awaiting the outcome of the treatment of his wife. He has hopes that she will be restored to him, fully cured. If he is disappointed, he will dispose of the property and seek a new home in the Far West, removed from the associations of the past.